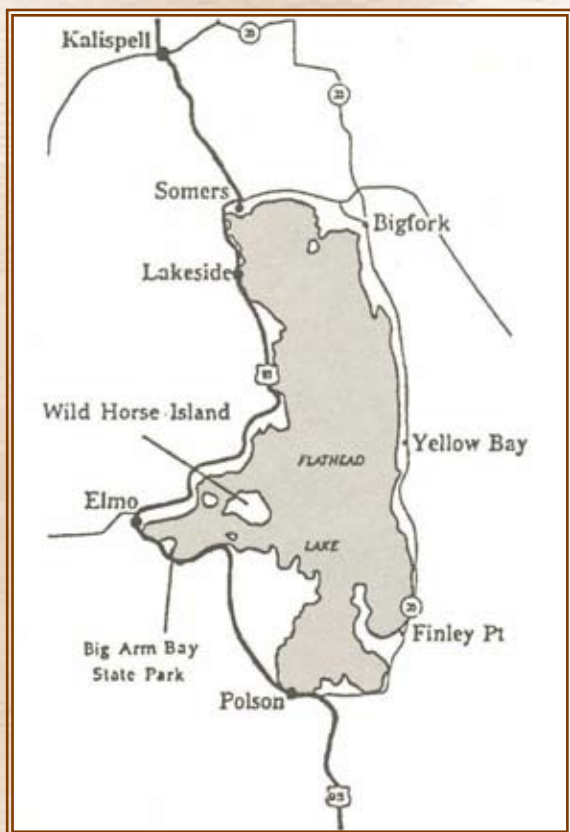


# WILD HORSE ISLAND STATE PARK

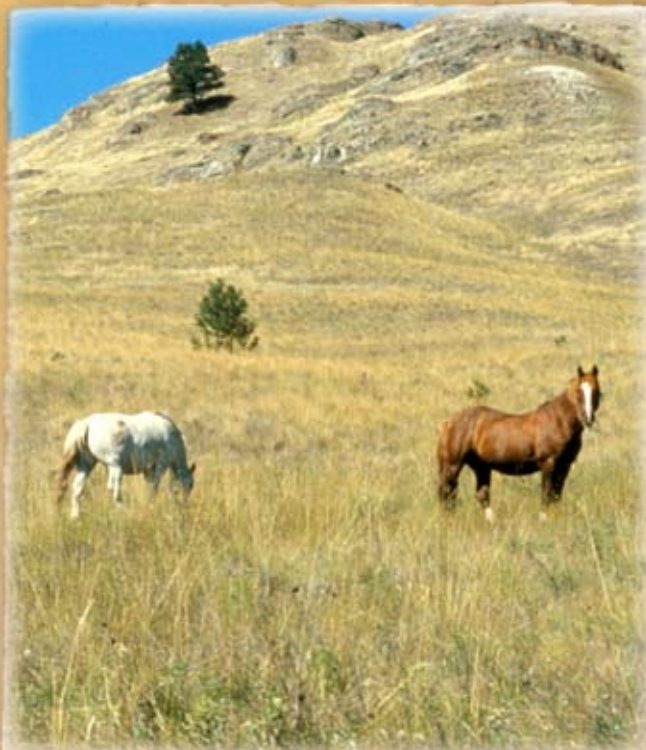


## GETTING THERE

Access to the island is via boat only. One nearby mainland public access point is Big Arm State Park. The park is located approximately 35 miles south of Kalispell and 13 miles north of Polson along US Highway 93. Boats can be rented at private marinas in Big Arm, Bigfork and Polson.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks receives federal funds and prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national origin, or handicap. For information or concerns regarding discrimination, contact the Personnel Office, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1420 East Sixth Avenue, Helena, MT 59620, (406) 444-2535, or Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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**PALOUSE PRAIRIE AND FORESTS  
SURROUNDED BY  
MAGNIFICENT FLATHEAD LAKE**



REAL MONTANA. REAL CLOSE.

## LANDING

Visitors are welcome to beach their boats at any of the six public landing sites on Wild Horse Island (see map). Since there are no public docks on the island, visitors are encouraged to land at these sites to minimize effects of human use. **CAUTION:** Visitors are cautioned to secure their boats adequately and be watchful for severe windstorms, which can occur suddenly. Do not tie boats to live trees.



## PRIVATE PROPERTY

There are 56 privately owned lots located along the perimeter of the island. Over half of these have cabins and boat docks. Lot owners must abide by public use regulations when they are off of their property. Please respect the rights of these individuals when beaching your boat, picnicking, or hiking near their property.

## VISITOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Camping is not permitted on the island.
- Pets are prohibited in the park.
- Vehicles, including bicycles, may not be operated in the park
- Fires, barbecues and smoking are not allowed due to fire danger.
- Use of any weapon, firearm or firework is not permitted.
- Littering and the disturbance or removal of natural or cultural features, objects, antlers or horns, or park property is prohibited.
- Groups of more than 15 persons are allowed by permit only.

## SPECIAL RESOURCE ZONES

Special Resource Zones have been established to protect threatened and endangered species from human disturbance. These areas are posted against entry (except by special permit) during various times of the years. Violators are subject to a citation from March 1 to July 15.



For more information or to report any violations, please contact:  
Montana State Parks  
490 N. Meridian Road  
Kalispell, MT 59901-3854  
406-752-5501  
TDD: 406-444-1200  
fwpprk@mt.gov





## WELCOME TO WILD HORSE ISLAND



Framed by the shimmering glacial waters of Flathead Lake and the high-rising peaks of the Mission Mountains, Wild Horse Island is a rare image of the peaceful rhythms of nature. Exploration of its inner reaches reveals mature Douglas fir and Ponderosa pine forests as well as a last remnant of Montana's native grassland, the palouse prairie.

These ecosystems provide habitat for more than 100 different birds and mammals, including such species as osprey, bald eagle, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, mule deer, coyote, and – yes – a few wild horses.

The island, created more than 17,000 years ago during a period of heavy glacial activity, has become a familiar landmark in the area. The source of the island's name originates from a legend that tells us:

Many years before the first European settlers arrived, local native people used the island to hide valuable steeds from the raids of their enemies. Inevitably, a few remained hidden on the island once the threat was over.

Although the island's original band of wild horses is long gone, its namesake tradition is kept alive through the Bureau of Land Management's "Adopt a Horse" program. A small number of wild mustangs acquired in this manner now inhabit the island. Keeping the herd small protects the native grasses while allowing the island's namesake tradition to continue.

Shortly after the turn of the 20th century, several homesteads were established on the island. Later, attempts to establish permanent resorts were made. In the years prior to its acquisition by the state, the primary landowner, Bourke Macdonald – with the help of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks – managed the area for wildlife and promoted public use.

Wild Horse Island became a state park in 1978 through the cooperative efforts of Mr. Macdonald's family, The Nature Conservancy, and the State of Montana. Although 56 privately owned parcels still exist along the shore areas, most of the island (2,163 acres) is now a state park.

Over time, Wild Horse Island has come to hold special meaning for those who have visited its rocky shores to hike, picnic, observe wildlife, swim, fish, or simply enjoy the peaceful solitude.





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